

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[February 1, 2022]



*Our weekly bulletin collects and digests news of the past week.
Contributions welcome.*

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NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

American Institute of Physics: [National Science Board weighs in on state of US science](#)

A new report from the National Science Board finds that the U.S. has continued to lose its clear leadership position in global science and engineering. Accordingly, the board recommends the nation position itself as an international hub for scientific collaboration and take urgent action to strengthen the domestic STEM workforce.

The Scientist: [Scientists investigate Omicron subvariant BA.2](#)

Researchers are monitoring the Omicron Subvariant BA.2, which is responsible for many outbreaks across Europe and Asia. Some early data predicts that this variant may be as much as 35% more transmissible than the original variant. However, scientists have observed no increase in severity in this new subvariant as compared to the original.

American Institute of Physics: [House unveils America COMPETES Act of 2022](#)

House Democrats release the COMPETES Act of 2022, which will significantly increase the budget for scientific research, support climate mitigation efforts, remove limitations on green cards for doctoral graduates in STEM, and expand the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

New York Times: [Court revokes oil and gas leases, citing climate change](#)

Judge Rudolph Contreras canceled oil and gas leases of more than 80 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico, saying that the Interior Department “acted arbitrarily and capriciously in excluding foreign consumption from their greenhouse gas emissions” and that it was required to do so under the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

The Hill: [Biden administration proposes restoration of power plant rules undermined by Trump](#)

The Biden administration affirmed that it is “appropriate and necessary” to regulate the emissions of these pollutants from power plants. “Sound science makes it clear that we need to limit mercury and toxins in the air to protect children and vulnerable communities from dangerous pollution,” EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement.

New York Times: [Biden Administration cancels mining leases near wilderness area](#)

The Biden administration canceled two mining leases with a Chilean conglomerate that would have allowed a copper mine to be built near the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, a vast landscape of protected lakes and forests along the border with Canada.

REGIONAL NEWS

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [Indiana lawmakers back “anti-free market” bill banning contracts with banks shedding fossil fuel investments](#)

The Indiana House of Representatives will soon vote on a HB 1224 prohibiting the state from investing in or entering contracts with companies that “boycott” fossil fuels. The bill is part of a nationwide effort by the fossil fuel industry to push back against industry divestment.

WFYI Indianapolis: [State environmental agencies’ facts given less weight in court under state House bill](#)

House bill 1063 could change the way trial court judges look at facts from state agencies like the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. The bill would require courts to consider the facts presented by businesses or individuals at the same level as those originating from state agencies.

Northwest Indiana Times: [“Hold us accountable”: Waste-to-fuel company coming to Gary hosts 3rd open house; environmental concerns persist](#)

Fulcrum BioEnergy, Inc., a California-based company that uses waste to produce jet fuel, is constructing a plant located in Gary, IN. The company has held 3 open houses in an effort to address residents’ concerns, but many say that the dialogue has come too late. The Gary Common Council approved a development agreement for the project in November 2021.

95.3 MNC: [Indiana General Assembly taking up issue of prescription drug costs](#)

Senate bill 88 could lower prescription drug costs for Hoosiers. It would require prescription benefit managers (the intermediaries between pharmaceutical companies and insurance agencies) to reduce the price of the drug by an amount equal to at least 85% of all rebates received by the insurer in connection with the dispensing or administration of the prescription drug.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Nature: [COVID’s lesson for governments? Don’t cherry-pick advice, synthesize it](#)

Much good scientific input has fallen aside because there’s no means to pick it up. Part of the problem has been a failure of synthesis—the ability to combine insights and

transcend disciplinary boundaries. Creating better syntheses should be a governmental priority as the crisis moves into a new phase.

Nature: [Social-media platforms failing to tackle abuse of scientists](#)

The international campaign group Avaaz studied posts on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram and discovered that many posts that targeted and harassed scientists or spread misinformation were still live and had not been marked with a warning by fact-checkers. In the meantime, some organizations are helping scientists by providing webinars that help them to control privacy settings and report abuse, so scientists can continue to directly communicate with the public.

Nature: [Why early-career researchers should step up to the peer-review plate](#)

Peer-review training should become a standard component of postgraduate curricula. Yet junior researchers have plenty to offer the peer-review process; the best reviews often come from younger scientists. Novice reviewers must take care to understand what's expected and what constitutes a conflict of interest, as well as how the open peer-review movement—which seeks to make reviews and publishing decisions more transparent—might affect the anonymity of their comments.

The Conversation: [Driverless cars won't be good for the environment if they lead to more auto use](#)

In 2022, Mercedes-Benz, BMW, and Honda, among other companies, plan to bring self-driving cars into the market. While these could be safer than human drivers, more efficient, and broaden opportunities for seniors and those with disabilities or who are unable to drive themselves, two new studies show that automated vehicles would increase traffic and transportation-related pollution.

Mongabay: [Innovative sewage solutions: Tackling the global human waste problem](#)

The sum of human waste has countless negative effects, destabilizing at least five planetary boundaries by polluting freshwater, oceans, and land, harming biodiversity, and contributing to climate change. According to the US Agency for International Development, roughly 60% of the global population lack access to proper sanitation. Elsewhere, aging infrastructure also poses serious risks, and conventional waste management systems can be expensive. Experts say there's only one sustainable solution to the pollution problem: capture, transform and reuse all waste, and begin treating it as a resource for electricity, drinkable water, and fertilizers.

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

Color Stack: [Launching Black and Latinx technologists](#)

To create successful science policy, everyone needs a seat at the table. ColorStack is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that runs community building, academic support, and career development programs for Black and Latinx college computer science students across the country. Participate in a training workshop, send the link to colleagues, or simply learn more at their website.

The CSIU Weekly News Bulletin is now available on the web. To view this page online go to <https://csiub.org/weekly-news-bulletins>. To view archives of past bulletins, see <https://csiub.org/bulletin-archives>.

Our CSIU news bulletin is intended to provide a brief update on recent news, editorials, as well as action items related to science integrity and science policy. Note that editorial pieces and action items are assembled from a variety of sources and organizations; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy priorities of Concerned Scientists @ IU. This week's news bulletin was compiled by CSIU member Christoph Irmscher of IU's Department of English and by ASIU members sophomore Rose Schnabel and (new to the team!) freshman Ana Lim. If you'd like to volunteer—or if you have additional links you'd like to share for future bulletins, send them to Christoph at cirmsche@indiana.edu.

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